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# Healthy Teeth Tips for Trick or Treaters and Their Parents

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A staggering amount of candy is consumed at Halloween, which can lead to an increase in cavities and tooth decay. The amount of money spent on dental care in the U.S. in 2010 was estimated to be \$108 billion – which is scarier for parents than any masked ghoul ringing their doorbell on Halloween night.

Though most of our days of trick or treating are long gone, many have children who will be lucky enough to go out this year. Therefore, we have three oral health tips for you to keep in mind as your kids collect mountains of candy or as you snack while handing it out.

All of these tips should be used along with routine dental care, which includes brushing twice a day, flossing regularly and using fluoride mouthwash.

First and foremost, don't forget to take a break from the sugar. Once your kids amass their collection of treats, it is important to give them some time between snacks. Our mouths try really hard to maintain a certain pH level by producing saliva. Each time you eat a sweet treat, this balance becomes more acidic and can take almost a half hour to return to normal, even after just a few sweet bites! An acidic pH can cause the enamel of your teeth to break down and become more prone to cavities. To avoid this, allow your child's mouth to recover to normal pH by allowing time to pass between fun-sized chocolate bars.

Second, have your child drink a glass of water after any sugar consumption. This will help their mouth return to a normal pH more quickly. The less time their mouth is at an acidic pH, the less damage will be caused to their enamel tooth structure.

Last, let your kid enjoy a piece of sugar free gum after snacking. This may sound strange as a tip from a dentist, but the gum can help in many ways; most importantly, when chewing gum, saliva flow is stimulated. As discussed above, saliva works to return the acidic pH caused by the sweets to neutral. By increasing the amount of saliva produced the pH of the mouth can become neutral more quickly.

We hope you all have a great Halloween and holiday season! Hopefully these tips will allow your children to enjoy the holiday and protect their oral health at the same time because we don't want to see your little ghosts and goblins in our clinic with cavities...

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And remember, these same tips apply to those adults who like to sneak a few goodies from their child’s plastic pumpkin.

Happy Halloween!

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